

IMAGING THE CREATOR

BY DAN RUSS

↓ UP GRAD

My image of the Garden of Eden is forever shaped by Julio — a Hispanic gardener at the university where I studied. I was his “boss” which meant that I made certain that he and others had the tools to do the real work. It was humbling. I handled a shovel like a klutz while Julio used it with the precision of a sculptor. I cursed the vines and flowers and bushes that refused to respond to my chemical stimulants. Julio talked and cultivated them up from the prairie’s sod into glorious bloom. I despaired at the numbers of young alien trees given to the university without the necessary sprinkler system to sustain them. Julio befriended the trees, caressed the earth around them, and invited them to live and thrive. I learned never to pronounce a brown tree dead or a leafy tree well without consulting Julio. He was for me the embodiment, in a fallen world, of Man creatively cultivating and subduing the earth, imaging the creator God.

Julio reminds us that God has created us to be creative. There is not in Scripture a romanticizing of raw nature. The world is made by God to be shaped with artifice by man. Whether we comb our hair, landscape our yard, arrange our table for eye as well as taste appeal, design our office as a stimulating and pleasing place of work, or play music in our car to set a mood for the day, we live

in a profoundly creative and therefore more fully human atmosphere.

Artists give witness to this aspect of our God-given humanity in the midst of a world preoccupied with economic survival and practical business. The artist makes our walls, clothing, cars, homes, skylines, lawns, books, periodicals, films, worship services, and schools a reminder that there is, as

Thomas Howard puts it, “splendor in the ordinary.” The artist has no corner on creativity any more than the preacher has a corner on Scripture. Both are simply gifted to open God’s world and God’s Word to the rest of us so that we may enjoy

and cultivate our given realm more fully.

This issue of *BOUNTY* honors such gifts through the work and words of several gifted people. Some you may recognize, but generally that is not the case. They are not included because they are celebrities (our contemporary counterfeit for artists) but because they are faithful workers who have followed their call, learned their craft, and helped us see the world differently because of it. We trust that the excerpts from Frank Gaebelein’s insightful article will help us understand the larger reasons why these people are so important to God’s design for the Church and the world. Gaebelein spent most of his eighty-two years reminding us of our cultural mandate to cultivate and shape the world in God’s image, by God’s design.

¡Gracias Julio! To God be the glory.



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